

What is claimed is:

1. A method of enabling data entry into a handheld electronic device, said data entry including a plurality of data elements, said method comprising:
  - detecting a first input into said handheld electronic device;
  - processing said detected first input to obtain a first of said data elements;
  - responsive to said first of said data elements, selecting a corresponding data format from a plurality of data formats;
  - detecting a second input into said handheld electronic device; and
  - processing said detected second input according to said selected corresponding data format to obtain a second of said data elements, said second of said data elements conforming to said selected corresponding data format.
2. The method of Claim 1 further comprising obtaining said second of said data elements including at least a first character, said at least a first character being one of numeric and alphabetic according to said selected corresponding data format.
3. The method of Claim 1 further comprising obtaining said second of said data elements including a plurality of characters, each one of said characters being one of numeric and alphabetic according to said selected corresponding data format.
4. The method of Claim 1 further comprising comparing said detected first input with a data set including a plurality of data records in a memory.
5. The method of Claim 4 further comprising identifying one of said data records to obtain said first of said data elements.
6. The method of Claim 4 further comprising initiating a routine to process said detected second input according to said selected corresponding data format.
7. The method of Claim 1 further comprising detecting a number of key inputs and processing each one of said detected key inputs to obtain a number of processed key outputs conforming to said selected corresponding data format.
8. The method of Claim 7 further comprising outputting each one of said processed key outputs to correspond with a corresponding one of said detected key inputs.
9. The method of Claim 8 further comprising outputting at least one of said processed key outputs that otherwise in the absence of said selected corresponding data format could be obtained from said corresponding one of said detected key inputs in combination with another detected key input.
10. The method of Claim 8 further comprising outputting at least one of said processed key outputs that otherwise in the absence of said selected corresponding data

format could represent a character that is one of alphabetic and numeric and that could represent a character that is the other of said one of alphabetic and numeric when said corresponding one of said detected key inputs is combined with one of a detected <ALT> key input and a detected <SHIFT> key input.

11. The method of Claim 10 further comprising outputting said at least one of said processed key outputs to represent a character that is the other of said one of alphabetic and numeric.

12. The method of Claim 8 further comprising outputting as a numeric character at least one of said processed key outputs that otherwise in the absence of said selected corresponding data format could represent a character that is alphabetic and that could represent a character that is numeric when said corresponding one of said detected key inputs is combined with one of a detected <ALT> key input and a detected <SHIFT> key input; employing another one of said processed key outputs that corresponds with another corresponding one of said detected key inputs; and outputting as an alphabetic character said another one of said processed key outputs that otherwise in the absence of said selected corresponding data format could represent a character that is alphabetic and that could represent a character that is numeric when said another corresponding one of said detected key inputs is combined with one of a detected <ALT> key input and a detected <SHIFT> key input.

13. The method of Claim 1 further comprising detecting initiation of said second input; determining that said first input has not yet been detected; and displaying a prompt to enter said first input.

14. The method of Claim 1 further comprising employing as said detected first input one of a country input and a sub-country input.

15. The method of Claim 14 further comprising determining that said detected first input is said sub-country input; comparing said detected first input with a data set that includes a plurality of country data records in a memory; and identifying one of said country data records to obtain said first of said data elements.

16. The method of Claim 15 further comprising detecting as said sub-country input one of a Canadian province and an American state; and obtaining as said first of said data elements one of a representation of Canada and a representation of America, respectively.

17. The method of Claim 16 further comprising selecting a first corresponding data format that corresponds with a Canadian postal code if said representation of Canada is

obtained as said first of said data elements; and selecting a second corresponding data format that corresponds with an American zip code if said representation of America is obtained as said first of said data elements.

18. A handheld electronic device structured to enable data entry, said data entry including a plurality of data elements, said handheld electronic device comprising:

a keyboard including a plurality of keys;

a display;

a processor including a memory and a routine that is adapted to respond to input signals from said keys and to generate output signals to said display;

said routine being adapted to detect a first input and to process said first input to obtain a first of said data elements;

responsive to said first of said data elements, said routine being adapted to generate a first of said output signals to said display;

responsive to said first of said data elements, said routine being adapted to select from said memory a corresponding data format from a plurality of data formats;

said routine being adapted to detect a second input from said keys; and

responsive to said detected second input, said routine being adapted to process said detected second input according to said selected corresponding data format to obtain a second of said data elements and to generate a second of said output signals to said display.

19. The handheld electronic device of Claim 18 wherein said routine is further adapted to generate said second of said output signals to represent a plurality of characters, each one of said characters being one of numeric and alphabetic according to said selected corresponding data format.

20. The handheld electronic device of Claim 18 wherein said routine is further adapted to compare said detected first input with a data set including a plurality of data records in said memory and to identify one of said data records to obtain said first of said data elements.

21. The handheld electronic device of Claim 18 wherein said routine is further adapted to detect a number of key inputs, to process each one of said detected key inputs to obtain a number of processed key outputs that conform to said selected corresponding data format, and to output each one of said processed key outputs to correspond with a corresponding one of said detected key inputs.

22. The handheld electronic device of Claim 21 wherein said routine is further adapted to output at least one of said processed key outputs that otherwise in the absence of

said selected corresponding data format could be obtained from said corresponding one of said detected key inputs and another detected key input.

23. The handheld electronic device of Claim 22 wherein said corresponding one of said detected key inputs represents a character that is one of alphabetic and numeric; wherein said corresponding one of said detected key inputs in combination with one of a detected <ALT> key input and a detected <SHIFT> key input represents a character that is the other of said one of alphabetic and numeric; and wherein said routine is further adapted to output said at least one of said processed key outputs to represent said character that is the other of said one of alphabetic and numeric.

24. The handheld electronic device of Claim 18 wherein said routine is further adapted to detect initiation of said second input, to determine that said first input has not yet been detected, and to display a prompt to enter said first input.

25. The handheld electronic device of Claim 18 wherein said routine is further adapted to employ as said detected first input one of a country input and a sub-country input.

26. The handheld electronic device of Claim 18 wherein said routine is further adapted to determine that said detected first input is said sub-country input, to compare said detected first input with a data set that includes a plurality of country data records in said memory, and to identify one of said country data elements to said first of said data elements.